

FIELD TO FACTORY  
Afro-American Migration  
1915-1940

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Between 1915 and 1940, hundreds of thousands of black Americans left the South and migrated to the cities of the North. This "Great Migration" changed both the lives of the Afro-American migrants and the racial status quo in much of the North. *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1915-1940*, a new exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, is the first major exhibition to examine the national impact of this crucial period in Afro-American and American history.

The Great Migration altered the very structure of American society and thrust the question of the "color line," as the noted scholar W. E. B. Du Bois labeled it, onto the national agenda. Newcomers, faced with an existence far different from their lives in the South, helped to create a new, more aggressive Afro-American community in the large, predominantly black neighborhoods that emerged in northern cities. Though this mass movement set the scene for modern life in most American cities today, it remains one of twentieth-century America's least studied and most poorly understood historical events.

*Field to Factory* interprets the complexities and effects of the Great Migration by focusing on the migrants themselves. Through them, the exhibition illustrates the individual experiences that together fueled this mass movement: the lives of Afro-Americans in the South, the hopes and expectations that prompted the decision to move north, and the difficulties migrants faced in a new environment. The exhibition also examines closely the new technologies and culture that the migrants found in the North, the adjustments they had to make to their new surroundings, and the ways in which the populations of northern cities had to adjust to them. The exhibition illustrates these changes and adaptations through the display of



a tenant farmhouse from southern Maryland, a recreation of a row house from Philadelphia, and more than 400 artifacts and documents.



By re-creating the environments in which the migrants lived, the exhibition offers an opportunity to understand the significance and difficulty of the migrants' decision to leave family, home, and friends. Although the Great Migration spawned important philosophical and social debates, it was first and foremost a movement of people, the result of hundreds of thousands of individual decisions to leave an old life behind in search of a brighter future.

The Great Migration was a movement within America, yet it paralleled the immigration experiences of other ethnic groups. Both migrants and immigrants carried their hopes and dreams, along with their cardboard suitcases and cloth bundles, into an uncertain existence. *Field to Factory* gives voice to the uniqueness of the Afro-American experience and yet echoes the immigration experience of all peoples.

The exhibition was organized by the National Museum of American History and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. It is made possible by the generous support of the Pepsi-Cola Company, the African American Museums Association, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Smithsonian Institution Educational Outreach Fund.

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## At the South Carolina State Museum March 4 - May 25, 1990

All programs will be held in the  
Museum Auditorium

Sunday, March 11 - 4 PM  
**"All God's Chillun Got 'Liglon"**  
Panel Discussion on Religion

Sunday, March 25 - 3 PM  
**"I Got Rhythm"**  
Panel Discussion on Music

Sunday, April 8 - 3 PM  
**"The Cultured Thing to Do"**  
Panel Discussion on the Arts

Thursday, April 19 - 7 PM  
**"It Don't Mean A Thing if it  
Ain't Got That Swing"**  
Musical Presentation of the Big Band Era  
with the Gene Dykes Band

Sunday, May 6 - 3 PM  
**"We Shall Overcome"**  
Panel Discussion on Civil Rights

Sunday, May 13 - 3 PM  
**"The New York Connection"**  
Panel Discussion about going North

Thursday, May 17 - 7 PM  
**"Dem Bones"**  
Musical Presentations with Gospel  
groups of the Jones and Jarvis Brothers

These programs are made possible by the Columbia  
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America, Inc.; Columbia Chapter of Links, Inc.;  
Ebony Keys; South Carolina State Museum

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## ONE-WAY TICKET

I am fed up  
With Jim Crow laws,  
People who are cruel  
And afraid,  
Who lynch and run,  
Who are scared of me  
And me of them.

I pick up my life  
And take it away  
On a one-way ticket—  
Gone up North,  
Gone out West,  
Gone!

Langston Hughes

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